Mr. Javed Ahmad Ghamidi vs. Ali Sina Part 11

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi and Khalid Zaheer vs. Ali Sina Part VI

	from: khalid zaheer
to: faithfreedom2 at gmail.com	
date: Nov 15 2006	
subject: Our Response	

Dear Mr Ali Sina

Let me briefly state where we have reached as yet in our discussion. You first criticized the Qur'an for being inconsistent in its scheme of ideas on the question of intercession. Your other objection was on the alleged haphazard use of pronouns in the Qur'an. While you have conceded that you have nothing to add to what you've already mentioned on the former issue, you have added a new dimension of criticism to what you had previously written on the latter. You have made a very strong case against the claim that Qur'an is a piece of poetry. I have to say that in an attempt at doing so, you have put in my mouth words I never said and then have gone on to criticize them. A basic confidence one should have in one's counterpart in a discussion is that he/she is trying to understand and present one's case correctly before criticizing it. I never mentioned that the Qur'an is a piece of poetry. What I said was that it is a message expressed in the highest level of literary excellence. In trying to prove my point, I quoted two great Urdu poets, Ghalib and Iqbal, to show how they too, in their literary presentations, used pronouns the way the Qur'an has done. I had to give their references because you had created an impression that it is absurd to believe that God, the author/first-person singular for Qur'an, should use first-person plural and third-person singular pronouns as well for Himself. Since you found the idea of shifting pronouns funny, I had to tell you that by the very act of criticizing Qur'anic text on the basis of such an argument you have indicated a worrying absence of appreciation for literary presentations in yourself. To say that Qur'an is a piece of highest literary excellence and that it doesn't violate any of the rules of literary masterpieces is one thing and to call it poetry is quite another thing. Your
subsequent criticism on the assumption that Qur'an has been claimed to be a piece of poetry was therefore irrelevant to our discussion.

In your criticism on the question of miracles you have again committed the same mistake: I didn't even talk about miracles. It seems that you have questions about Islam that are causing you to be agitated against the faith and in your exuberance to get answers to them you assume that all Muslims, including us, are saying the same thing on those issues. My mention about the possibility of a beast declaring that "these men were not willing to believe

in our signs” was not a statement meant to affirm the appearance of miracles. It was a part of my response to one of your objections. Your objection was that the Qur’an was inconsistent in informing us as to who has been appointed by God to guide man. At times it is suggested that only men can guide men. On other occasions it is stated that angels guide men. On still other occasions one gets the impression that Jinn also get guided by men. And, what agitated you the most was that, on one occasion at least, according to the Qur’an, it will be a beast who will guide men. I had explained, in response to this criticism, in my previous message that “the evidence of the beast will not be meant to convince any of the humans to accept the message. Instead, it will be used as a final measure to expose the indefensible stubbornness of the deniers of the message of God.” The idea was to show that, unlike your claim, the Qur’anic presentation on who guides whom was fully consistent. When we’ll talk about miracles we will let you know, God willing, that their appearance is as clear and understandable as any other scientific reality. However, we have not as yet reached the stage of discussion where we are talking about miracles.

You have criticized the following part of my translation of the verse “we might bring out a beast from the land to confirm…” by claiming that many notable English translations of the Qur’an are giving an understanding different from mine. I would say that if a statement has been translated by giving due consideration to all aspects of the principles of usage of that language and the context in which it was stated, then the mere claim that other people do not understand that statement the same way is not necessarily a strong evidence to refute the validity of the translation. Indeed for a commoner there might be a reason to be unconvinced about a translation which is different from most others, but those who are keen to know the text in its correct meanings at an academic level must give a good thought to all arguments provided to support a particular translation. I have translated the verb “akhrajnaa” into English with “We might bring out” because in the classical Arabic verbs carried a number of possibilities. Depending upon what the context was, a verb could be taken in the meanings of its ordinary sense, the sense of it being intended, its possibility of happening, its happening at an initial level, its happening at the ultimate level etc. I have translated the verb appearing in the relevant verse to convey the meanings of its (the verb’s) possibility because the context accepts that understanding more than any other.

That paves the way for me to address another criticism you have raised: If the Qur’an was so clear, as its author claims, why does it lend itself to so many interpretations? The answer to it is that the clarity of a text is its intrinsic quality. Whether someone would be able to understand it would depend on whether he is making a genuine attempt at doing so or not. The Qur’an was indeed absolutely clear and effective to its immediate addressees. Whether they accepted its contents or rejected it, the meanings it was conveying were unmistakable. The people of the later times had to be well versed with the language and idiom of the Arabic of the era when the Qur’an was getting revealed. Added to that difficulty was the problem that people already had interpretations in mind that prevented them from searching objectively the true meanings of the text. However, even today if one were to know the language of the Qur’anic times (for which the Qur’an itself is the best source) and decides to ignore all extraneous influences in favour of the Qur’an, its text is remarkably clear. The

difficulty in understanding the Qur'an is similar to the difficulty one faces in understanding all other clear masterpieces the appreciation of subtleties of whose language and style of expression have become extinct save to those who have undertaken the trouble to master them.

My request to you in my earlier message to make an attempt to understand the scheme of Qu'anic presentation the way the Qur'an presents itself was also meant to do the same thing: To ask you to try to understand the Qur'an the way it is. This is exactly how every text is expected to be understood if it is to be appreciated seriously. You have picked this point of mine too for criticizing in a manner which makes no sense at all. All genuine critics would first satisfy the authors of the texts they are criticizing to ensure that they have understood the meanings of the text properly before criticizing them. If you are criticizing the meanings of a text which its author doesn't even agree that it is emerging from it, how can you criticize it? And if you are criticizing it then what are you trying to achieve in doing so? To all neutral followers of the discussion it would only be an
attempt at criticizing a text simply for the sake of it in a non-academic, non-serious manner.

I had requested you earlier that it serves no purpose to burden the readers with scores of topics at one time. In doing so you can do a good job at stirring the emotions of some feeble-minded followers, but you do no service to the cause of a serious discussion like the one we are engaged in. Let's have an exhaustive discussion on the topics we have already touched upon first. If we decide by mutual consent that nothing more needs to be said about them, we can move on to the new areas for discussion. We promise that
we will answer each and every question you will ask on the subject under discussion. However, if you are going to throw all your confusions at us at one time, we would beg to excuse from participating in the discussion any more. A good tennis player can return a serve, howsoever good it may be, but he cannot return several serves thrown at him simultaneously. The spectators too are not going to enjoy such a silly game.

You have mentioned that we have not responded to your offer of posting your messages on our site. Let me tell you that the reason for our reluctance to make the discussion available on our sites is not the fact that you are writing against Islam. The reason it is not happening is that your tone is uncivilized. We too strongly believe in freedom of thought and expression.

However, freedom of expression is one thing and insulting someone's revered personality is quite another. While discussing a controversial matter, a decent person would stick to the topic under discussion and not go about making disparaging remarks about individuals who are held in high esteem by the other debating party. We are engaged in a serious academic discussion and not in a match of hurling invectives at each other.

If you are discussing the possibility whether a person is a murderer or not with someone who doesn't share your view, you are expected to stick to the arguments which would lead the other to believe that the accused was indeed a criminal. Before you prove it to the other person that the accused was a killer, you can't go on to insult and disparage him. A young

man ‘A’ considers ‘B’ his father while ‘C’ claims that ‘B’ is not A’s father. So long as C hasn’t been able to convince A, the latter is convinced that B is his father. Any insulting and uncivilized mention that the truth was otherwise would be unacceptable to all decent people of the world. This truth is quite clear to every intelligent, cultured person. Unfortunately, it is being openly violated regularly in your messages. We Muslims consider Muhammad as the chosen messenger of God. We love him more than we love our parents because we are convinced that he was God’s messenger. On the other hand you keep using for him the filthiest of words you can find from the dictionary. You then expect us to post your mails on our sites. We are prepared to post all decent messages of disagreement on our websites. However, we will not, God willing, ever allow any insulting language to be posted about anyone, not even about those with whom we disagree strongly.

You have every right to say that the Qur’an is not the word of God and that Muhammad was not his prophet so long as you are not convinced about our claims. We can go on discussing our respective views in the light of our arguments. We welcomed the initiative taken by you to initiate this discussion. However, if we see any nonsense hurled at our prophet in your future messages to us, this discussion would discontinue there and then.

As always, this message has been written after I was briefed by Mr Ghamidi.

Khalid Zaheer